

What is Ebola virus disease?

Ebola virus disease (formerly known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever) is a rare and often deadly illness caused by the Ebola virus. It most commonly affects people and nonhuman primates, such as monkeys, chimpanzees, and gorillas.

Who gets Ebola virus disease?

Ebola virus is not found in the United States. It has been found in parts of central and west Africa and occasionally Ebola virus disease outbreaks occur in these areas. People become infected with Ebola virus through contact with infected wild animals or contact with blood or body fluids (urine, feces, saliva, sweat, vomit, breast milk, and semen) of infected humans. People at higher risk of infection include healthcare workers, family members or others who have close contact with infected people or who have contact with their bodies during funerals or burying rituals.

How is Ebola virus disease spread?

Ebola virus is found in wild animals, such as fruit bats, monkeys, chimpanzees or gorillas. It can spread to people when they have contact with an infected animal's blood, body fluids, or tissues. Ebola virus then spreads from person to person through direct contact with blood or body fluids of a person who is sick with or has died from Ebola virus disease. This can happen when a person touches the infected body fluids or objects that are contaminated with them, such as medical equipment like needles and syringes. The virus enters the body through broken skin, through the eyes, nose or mouth, or through sexual contact.

What are the symptoms of Ebola virus disease?

Symptoms of Ebola virus disease include fever, severe headache, muscle pain weakness, fatigue, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal (stomach) pain, and, in some cases, unexplained hemorrhage (bleeding or bruising). Many of these symptoms are also present with other more common diseases, such as malaria and typhoid fever.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear 8-10 days after exposure, with a range of 2 -21 days.

How is Ebola virus disease diagnosed?

If Ebola virus disease is suspected based on the person's symptoms and exposure to Ebola virus, such as close contact with an Ebola-infected person, he or she should be isolated (separated from other people) and the local health department should be notified. Special laboratory tests of the blood are needed to confirm the diagnosis of Ebola virus disease.

What is the treatment for Ebola virus disease?

Although some medicines to treat Ebola virus disease are being investigated, there is currently no approved medicine to treat Ebola virus disease. Treatment consists of supportive care and relief of symptoms.

How can Ebola virus disease be prevented?

There are several steps to take to prevent Ebola virus disease when living in or traveling to area with Ebola virus disease:

- Wash hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid contact with other people's blood or body fluids
- Do not handle items that might have come in contact with a person's blood or body fluids, such as clothing, bedding, and medical equipment
- Avoid participation in funeral or burial rituals that require handling a dead body
- Avoid contact with bats and nonhuman primates or blood, fluids and raw meat prepared from these animals (bushmeat) or meat from an unknown source
- Avoid contact with semen from a man who had Ebola virus disease until you know the virus is gone from the semen
- Wear protective clothing and follow infection control recommendations when caring for an infected person

Although Ebola virus vaccines are being investigated, there is currently no FDA-approved or widely available vaccine to prevent Ebola virus disease.

Could Ebola virus be used for bioterrorism?

Ebola virus and other viruses that cause hemorrhagic fever are considered possible bioterrorism agents because the viruses could be intentionally released, spread from person to person, and cause severe disease or death.

How can I learn more about Ebola virus disease?

- If you have concerns about Ebola virus disease, contact your healthcare provider.
- Call your local health department. A directory of local health departments is located at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/local-health-districts/>.
- Visit the VDH website that contains guidance for healthcare providers at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-preparedness/emergency-preparedness/agents-disease-s-threats/biological-agents/viral-hemorrhagic-fever/>.
- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>.